

**Minutes of the Regular Commission Meeting of the
Southern California Coastal Water Research Project Authority (SCCWRP)**

**Held at the offices of the Authority:
3535 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, California 92626**

**March 6, 2020
9:00 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Diane Fleck— *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9*
Karen Mogus — *State Water Resources Control Board*
Mark Gold (Chair) — *California Ocean Protection Council*
Renee Purdy — *Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Hope Smythe — *Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board*
David Barker — *San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board*
Mas Dojiri — *City of Los Angeles*
Martha Tremblay — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Jim Herberg — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Peter Vroom — *City of San Diego*
Arne Anselm — *Ventura County Watershed Protection District*
Paul Alva — *Los Angeles County Department of Public Works*
Amanda Carr — *County of Orange*
Todd Snyder (Vice Chair) — *County of San Diego*

STAFF PRESENT

Stephen Weisberg — *Executive Director*
Bryan Nece — *Administrative Officer*
Brant Dveirin — *Legal Counsel*
Ken Schiff — *Deputy Director*
John Griffith — *Department Head*
Martha Sutula — *Department Head*
Charles Wong — *Department Head*
Elizabeth Fassman-Beck — *Principal Engineer*
Scott Martindale — *Communications Coordinator*
Alvina Mehinto — *Principal Scientist*
Kristine Taniguchi-Quan — *Scientist*

OTHERS PRESENT

Jonathan Bishop — *State Water Resources Control Board*
Sam Choi — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Nikos Melitos — *Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts*
Charlie Yu — *City of Los Angeles*
George Robertson — *Orange County Sanitation District*
Lan Wiborg — *Alternate Commissioner, Orange County Sanitation District*

Commission Chair Mark Gold called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Minutes of Meetings Held December 13, 2019

Commission Chair Gold requested two line-item revisions to the minutes of the Commission's December 13, 2019 meeting to more accurately reflect statements he made at that meeting.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the December minutes with the requested revisions, and Commissioner Alva seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioners Fleck and Herberg abstaining.

2. Quarterly Financial Statement for the Period Ended December 31, 2019

3. Quarterly Statement of Investments at December 31, 2019

4. Minutes of CTAG Meetings Held February 6, 2020

Commissioner Herberg motioned to approve Consent Items 2-4, and Commissioner Dojiri seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously with Commissioner Fleck abstaining.

Commissioner Carr arrived at 9:15 am.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Personnel and Finance Committee Report

Commissioner Vroom, Chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee, reported that the Committee reviewed SCCWRP's latest financial audit – which was clean with no exceptions for the 20th year in a row – and is recommending that the Commission approve the audit. Vroom said that a budget deficit that was initially projected for the current fiscal year due to capital improvement spending is no longer excepted – a reflection of SCCWRP's excellent fiscal health. Vroom said the Committee is recommending full Commission approval of the latest Joint Powers Agreement that will extend SCCWRP's existence for five years beyond 2021. Vroom announced that the Commission will be hosting a strategic planning retreat within the next 12 months that will include, among other things, exploring a possible name for the organization. Vroom added that the draft JPA that Commissioners received inadvertently incorporated a proposed name change for SCCWRP that has since been removed from consideration. Vroom said the Personnel and Finance Committee has conducted Executive Director Weisberg's performance review and Commission Chair Gold will follow up with Weisberg on suggestions that came out of that review. Vroom said the Committee also reviewed a plan SCCWRP has developed for responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

6. 2019 Financial Audit

Administrative Officer Nece reported that SCCWRP's 2018-2019 financial audit had come back clean, with no deficiencies.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to receive the 2019 Financial Audit, and Commissioner Mogus seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioner Fleck abstaining.

7. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Weisberg discussed the outsized impact that SCCWRP has had on science and management as a result of its strong partnerships with other organizations, especially SCCWRP member agencies. He discussed four recent workshops that speak to the strength of SCCWRP's partnerships: (1) SCCWRP in February hosted a workshop that brought together the world's leading experts on crabs and other decapods to develop consensus on the biologically relevant thresholds at which these marine organisms would experience adverse impacts from ocean acidification. The decapod workshop is the third of three acidification threshold workshops that SCCWRP has hosted; the other, earlier workshops focused on pteropods and echinoderms, respectively. (2) SCCWRP is facilitating a workshop this fall that will bring together global experts to examine the health effects of microplastics exposure. This workshop follows a workshop last year that focused on establishing measurement methods for microplastics; the measurement methods workshop led to the development of an ongoing international study that will evaluate various prototype measurement methods side by side. Labs around the world are interested in participating in this study because it will form the scientific foundation in California for immediate management actions on microplastics pollution. (3) SCCWRP has been asked to host the second national environmental DNA (eDNA) conference, a reflection of SCCWRP's ability to connect with the management community that is the target end-user audience of efforts to develop eDNA methods for ecosystem monitoring. (4) SCCWRP has been selected via a competitive proposal process to host the International Water Association's International Conference on Urban Drainage Modeling, scheduled for fall 2021 in Long Beach. The conference committee's decision is a reflection of SCCWRP's strong connections to the regional water-quality management community.

Weisberg reported that SCCWRP is continuing to bring member agencies together to advance science. SCCWRP is at the center of a coordinated effort by three Water Quality Regional Water Quality Control Boards to address climate change issues; SCCWRP is building the scientific foundation for both short-term and long-term projects. Weisberg also reported the Southern California chapter of the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) is organizing a special session at its annual conference to recognize the accomplishments of Steve Bay, the retiring head of SCCWRP's Toxicology Department; Bay's accomplishments in the sediment quality field were aided by the many contributions of SCCWRP member agencies over the years.

Weisberg reported that the ongoing renovation of SCCWRP's laboratories is going well. He reported that labs are being upgraded with double doors, upgraded air filtration systems and positive pressure to create cleaner environments for activities like genomics extractions and microplastics measurements.

Commissioner Purdy commented that the science of tracking fecal contamination in recreational waters has advanced considerably, but that regulators still need more clarity over the relationship between the signals being measured and human health risk; she encouraged SCCWRP to help define for regulators which tools are most appropriate to use. Commission Chair Gold responded by noting that while this research is critical and ongoing, SCCWRP should pursue this research in support of human health risk endpoints, not just regulatory endpoints. Weisberg responded with agreement, indicating that SCCWRP's Microbial Water Quality research theme reflects the thought process advocated by Commissioners Purdy and Gold.

8. CTAG Report

CTAG Chair Neil Searing announced that he was elected Chair at the February 2020 CTAG meeting. Sam Choi was elected Vice Chair, and outgoing CTAG Chair Chad Loflen became Past Chair. Searing reported on the outcomes of the CTAG bioassessment research planning intersessional, an all-day workshop in January 2020 that attracted 12 of 14 member agencies. There is strong agreement between CTAG and SCCWRP staff's bioassessment research priorities, and broad, cross-sector support among SCCWRP member agencies for bioassessment research, particularly transitioning this work to management applications. Searing reported on the outcomes of an annual exercise by SCCWRP member agencies to prioritize among SCCWRP's nine research themes. Searing said based on the voting outcomes, the research themes will stay unchanged this year. SCCWRP's microplastics research will not elevate to its own theme, but will fall under the Contaminants of Emerging Concern research theme. He also stated that CTAG will work with SCCWRP staff to evolve the Sediment Quality research theme, which has accomplished most of its current objectives.

Searing said CTAG recommends Commission approval/endorsement of all new SCCWRP contracts.

9. Contract Review

SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement requires Commission approval of contracts of more than \$250,000, and the State of California requests a resolution of acceptance for contracts exceeding \$100,000 offered by the State or Regional Water Boards. Weisberg recommended approval of the following contracts:

- 1) State Water Resources Control Board (\$4,392,939)
SWAMP Special Studies

Asked by Commission Chair Gold about the structure of the SWAMP contract, Commissioner Mogus said a deliberate decision was made to consolidate multiple contracts under a single, streamlined contract. Commissioner Tremblay asked why SCCWRP would want to take on a contract to conduct bioassessment work outside of southern California. Executive Director Weisberg said that while most of SCCWRP's work is focused on its core region, it occasionally adopts work outside the region for one of two reasons. The first is to assess statewide applicability of tools it has developed for southern California, as those can become more valuable to the member agencies if they are adopted statewide. Weisberg

said that SCCWRP also occasionally takes on projects outside of Southern California where SCCWRP is uniquely qualified and it provides context for work we do in our region. He gave an example of an ongoing project to facilitate an expert review of a Central Valley agricultural monitoring program, as the outcomes of that review provide perspective on how SCCWRP can help refine regional stream monitoring programs in southern California.

Commissioner Dojiri motioned to approve the above contract requiring Commission approval, and Commissioner Purdy seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioners Fleck and Mogus abstaining.

Weisberg presented the remaining nine contracts, all of which have values of \$250,000 or less and thus do not require Commission approval. The contracts were presented to ensure consistency of the agency's directions with the Commission's intentions.

- 2) EPA (San Jose State University) (\$135,000)
RipRAM Validation Assessment Tools
- 3) City of San Diego (through Wood) (\$82,000)
Biofilm Microbial
- 4) County of San Diego (through Wood) (\$18,175)
Los Coches Watershed Wet Weather Water Quality Monitoring
- 5) USEPA (through SFEI) (\$12,058)
Escaped Trash Assessment
- 6) State Water Resources Control Board (\$58,039)
Statewide Evaluation of Biointegrity in Engineered Channels
- 7) NOAA (through UC San Diego) (\$248,396)
Oceanographic and Cellular Controls on Domoic Acid
- 8) NOAA (through University of Washington) (\$150,000)
Development of Metabolic Indices to Quantify Climate Change and Local Pollution Impacts to Coastal Hypoxia
- 9) NOAA (\$50,503)
Quantifiable Relationships of Crab Megalopae to OA-related Variables
- 10) EPA (through San Jose State) (\$135,000)
Validation of Riparian Condition Assessment Method

The Commission did not raise any objections to the contracts.

10. Joint Powers Agreement

Executive Director Weisberg explained that SCCWRP's Joint Powers Agreement is the legal document that SCCWRP member agencies must sign about every four years to establish the agency's existence. The Commission's Personnel and Finance Committee has drafted a JPA that will extend SCCWRP's existence for five years beyond July 1, 2021. Although not all member agencies sign the JPA, the signatories ask for a vote by the full Commission to approve the JPA before they advance it for signature. The next JPA is similar to the existing JPA, with adjustments to the number of years in the agreement, five instead of four, and an increase in member agency dues to account for inflation. Weisberg also said that the Committee considered a name change for the organization to reflect that the reach of its influence extends beyond southern California and just coastal waters, the Committee preferred to table that discussion until it could be discussed in greater detail with the entire Commission at the upcoming Commission strategic planning retreat.

Commissioner Carr motioned to approve the next Joint Powers Agreement without a name change for SCCWRP, and Commissioner Vroom seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion unanimously, with Commissioner Fleck abstaining.

11. Stormwater Monitoring Coalition's Research Priorities

Deputy Director Schiff opened his presentation by providing a brief history of the Southern California Stormwater Monitoring Coalition (SMC). The SMC was conceptualized by two SCCWRP member agencies that recognized during a 2001 Commission meeting that watersheds do not begin and end at jurisdictional boundaries, and that regional research collaborations could lead to mutually beneficial outcomes. The SMC is established by a Master Agreement that enables SMC member agencies to make voluntary financial contributions to individual SMC projects. Since 2001, the SMC has completed more than 30 projects valued at \$18 million and SCCWRP has either led or facilitated most of those projects. Among the SMC's most notable accomplishments is facilitating a method comparison study of Microbial Source Tracking methods that ultimately identified the HF183 genetic marker as the optimal approach for tracking human fecal contamination in watersheds. Last year, the SMC assembled a panel of outside experts to develop a five-year research agenda for the SMC; this 2019-2024 research agenda is made up of 26 projects broken down into six thematic areas. The emphasis of all SMC research is on providing relevant, actionable information to inform regional stormwater management.

Asked by Commission Vice Chair Snyder about a project in the Research Plan that involves evaluating the effectiveness of nonstructural stormwater BMPs, Schiff said the SMC will be putting together a workplan and then deciding on a subset of nonstructural BMPs to evaluate. Commission Chair Gold urged the SMC to update event mean concentration (EMC) values for pollutant loading in Southern California to accommodate the fact that land uses have changed since the values were originally developed by SCCWRP nearly 20 years ago. Gold also urged the SMC to partner with economists to evaluate cost-benefits, and to be cognizant that stormwater is increasingly being recognized as a water supply. Schiff said updating EMC values is a priority for SCCWRP and CTAG, although not specifically the SMC.

12. BMP Inventory and Web App

Deputy Director Schiff began this presentation by explaining that stormwater management agencies are planning to implement billions of dollars of stormwater BMPs in the coming decades to improve receiving water quality. As part of this so-called Alternative Compliance pathway, stormwater managers are required to conduct reasonable assurance analysis (RAA) to demonstrate that these planned BMPs will meet desired water-quality improvement goals. Managers are required to validate their RAA modeling work using real-world data sets on BMP performance. However, most of the data that Southern California stormwater managers use were not generated in Southern California. To address this challenge, SCCWRP compiled BMP performance data from across California. SCCWRP also developed a web app that allows managers to evaluate the performance of flow-through BMPs in treating more than a dozen types of stormwater contaminants. The web-based calculator automatically estimates the concentration of the effluent, based on incoming contaminant concentration in the stormwater. The calculator also calculates the level of uncertainty associated with BMP performance estimates, in accordance with RAA specifications.

Asked by Commission Vice Chair Snyder if the project has helped shed light on which BMPs are more effective than others, Schiff said that the findings can help rule out some BMPs, but that more data are needed to understand relative pollutant and removal efficiency. Asked by Commissioner Carr if BMP performance has been compared to standards, Schiff said it could be done but was not done for this study because standards are inconsistent across regions and watersheds. Asked by Commissioner Anselm about proprietary BMPs, Schiff said that these BMPs would need to be independently tested, but that it is unclear if SCCWRP should be the entity doing this testing. Asked by Commissioner Wiborg if BMP effectiveness will be influenced by climate change, Schiff said SCCWRP is actively exploring this question.

13. Stormwater Capture and Use Guidance

Principal Engineer Fassman-Beck started this presentation by explaining that as California recycles and reuses more water, there is limited ability at the statewide level to quantify the impact of these efforts. As part of California's Recycled Water Policy, the State Water Board has been tasked with quantifying how much stormwater is being captured and/or could be captured for water supply. SCCWRP recently investigated multiple options that the State could use to estimate the volume of stormwater capture across California. At one end of the spectrum are options that require high level of effort to implement but provide a high level of accuracy, and at the other end are options that require comparatively less effort to implement but provide less accuracy. Fassman-Beck said SCCWRP was not asked to develop a recommended pathway, but said SCCWRP likely would recommend mixing and matching multiple methods.

Commissioner Carr noted that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is sponsoring a grant program that supports development of methods for quantifying stormwater capture. Commissioner Herberg noted that the Orange County Water District already does extensive modeling work to estimate how much water enters groundwater basins, and could become a case study. Commission Chair Gold commented that improved

partnerships between water suppliers and water-quality managers could incentivize efforts to develop stormwater capture quantification methods.

14. Commission Strategic Planning Meeting

Executive Director Weisberg explained that the Commission holds an all-day strategic planning retreat about every five years to look past daily operations and set long-term direction for the agency. The Commission has assembled a committee to plan for the next such retreat, and the committee has agreed that the meeting should focus on four main topics: (1) revisiting SCCWRP's organizational foundation, including mission, vision and metrics for success, (2) defining what SCCWRP's biggest research aspirations should be, (3) reviewing how SCCWRP is doing on communication, and (4) revisiting whether the organization should consider a name change. The committee also agreed SCCWRP should develop and administer an online satisfaction survey to gather feedback prior to the retreat. All Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners will be invited, and CTAG and senior SCCWRP will participate as observers.

The Commission engaged in discussion regarding whether any outside groups should be invited to the retreat. Commissioners agreed that the San Francisco Estuary Institute – SCCWRP's sister organization – should be present, but were less sure about inviting other groups that tend to interact with SCCWRP on a more limited, project-specific basis. Weisberg said SCCWRP will continue to interact with these groups regardless of whether they attend the retreat. Commissioners Purdy, Gold and Vroom volunteered to work with SCCWRP to develop the pre-meeting satisfaction survey. Commissioners expressed support for holding the meeting at a facility in Newport Bay that was recommended by Commissioner Carr. Weisberg said he will send out a poll to Commissioners to schedule a date for the retreat.

15. Other Business and Communications

None

16. Future Meeting Agenda Items

Executive Director Weisberg said the Commission previously agreed to tentatively discuss four main items at the June 2020 meeting: (1) the SMC's 10-year assessment of the biological health of Southern California watersheds, (2) an update on SCCWRP's flow ecology research, focusing on an ongoing Los Angeles River environmental flows study, (3) a briefing on the development of California's statewide flow criteria, and (4) a briefing on the status of implementation of bioassessment-based stream biointegrity policy at the State Water Board and San Diego Regional Board levels. Commissioners expressed support for these agenda items.

17. Public Comments

None

18. Adjournment

Commission Mark Gold adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM until the next Commission meeting on June 5, 2020 at 9:00 AM.

Attest:

Bryan Nece
Secretary